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92-38

**SBC Cooperative Program down,  
February designated gifts up**

NASHVILLE (BP)--The SBC Cooperative Program total for February dropped more than 12 percent but designated gifts received by the Executive Committee rose nearly 8 percent, according to Harold C. Bennett, Executive Committee president/treasurer.

CP total for February was \$11,988,817 compared to the same month in 1991 of \$13,682,655 or a 12.38 percent decrease. For the SBC fiscal year, Oct. 1 through Sept. 30, the Cooperative Program was down slightly, 0.63 percent, at \$57,954,409 compared to \$58,323,609 for the comparable year-to-date.

"I am concerned that the CP year-to-date gifts are down slightly compared to a year ago," Bennett said. "However, I still believe Southern Baptists believe in our world missions program and the need to support world missions through our Cooperative Program."

The drop in February receipts followed a huge, 20.99 percent, increase in CP gifts in January. The 1991-92 monthly basic operating budget requirement for the SBC is \$11,725,856.

Designated gifts were up \$2,916,909 for February, 7.69 percent, for a total of \$40,831,809 for the month compared to \$37,914,890 a year ago. Designated gifts for the year-to-date were up 11.80 percent at \$66,213,413 compared to a year ago at \$59,225,459.

Designated contributions include the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions, world hunger and other special gifts.

The Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists' method of supporting ministry and missions through state and regional conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention. State and regional conventions retain a percentage of Cooperative Program contributions they receive from the churches to support work in their areas and send the remaining funds to the Executive Committee for national and international ministries.

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Raleigh church endorses  
 union of homosexuals

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press  
 3/2/92

RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)--The "same-gender union" of two homosexuals has been approved by members of Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in Raleigh.

The congregation's secret ballot vote was announced March 1 at the conclusion of worship. Of 750 ballots mailed to Pullen Memorial members, 531 were returned, with 64 percent approving the same-gender union and 94 percent favoring full church membership for homosexuals.

Deliberations by Pullen Memorial -- and by Olin T. Binkley Memorial Baptist Church in Chapel Hill, N.C., over licensing a homosexual to the gospel ministry -- prompted the Southern Baptist Executive Committee Feb. 18 to adopt a resolution against homosexuality and against such congregational actions.

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The Executive Committee also initiated efforts to change the Southern Baptist Convention's constitution and bylaws to bar any church "affirming, approving or endorsing in any way the active practice of homosexuality," according to one proposal.

The committee will meet prior to the SBC's June 9-11 meeting in Indianapolis to formulate any specific proposals to be presented to messengers representing Southern Baptist churches across the country.

The Southern Baptist Convention has adopted six resolutions against homosexuality since 1976, the latest during last year's meeting in Atlanta.

The Executive Committee's initiative, however, "could reverse more than 140 years of precedent by adding a church's stand on a social issue, homosexuality, as a requirement for participation in the SBC," according to an article in the Feb. 27 issue of Word & Way, newsjournal of the Missouri Baptist Convention.

"Everybody (at Pullen Memorial) has struggled deeply with what it means to be church in our day," the pastor, Mahan Siler, told Baptist Press March 2.

The church has learned about "the particular struggle of homosexuals in our culture," Siler said, "(and) how to be a community that values individual expression and differences of opinion." The church began its deliberations last fall after a church member asked Siler to perform a marriage-like ceremony for him and his homosexual companion.

Pullen Memorial's actions will be discussed during a March 28 dialogue sponsored by the Raleigh Baptist Association's mutual care commission. The meeting will be open to the pastor and a lay representative of each of the association's 70 churches, said Siler, a member of the commission. It will be "a Baptist family meeting," he said, not to take a stand for or against the church's actions "but to foster understanding and dialogue around a subject that all churches are facing or will face."

Beyond its SBC ties, Pullen Memorial also is affiliated with the American Baptist Convention, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Southern Baptist Alliance.

Roy J. Smith, executive director of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, issued a written statement in response to Pullen's actions.

Smith stated: "... although I affirm the autonomy of the local church and the worth of every individual, my personal understanding of the New Testament compels me to reject the homosexual lifestyle based on several passages of Scripture. Although I have no authority as executive director of the state convention to speak for any Baptist except myself, I nevertheless must state my position clearly. I do not affirm, approve nor condone such lifestyle which I believe stands clearly outside the teachings of the New Testament."

Smith's statement noted, however, the constitutions of the SBC and North Carolina Baptists share identical wording that neither body claims "any authority over any other Baptist body, whether church, auxiliary organizations, associations" or conventions.

"Any action of any kind taken by a local Baptist church enjoys the protection of our cherished belief in the autonomy of the local church in determining its own policies and establishing its beliefs," Smith wrote.

And, Smith noted: "Baptist churches, as with all Christian churches, must place at the center of their 'reason for being' the role of positive ministry to all people ... Jesus Christ set this hard example in the gospel by reaching out to the 'least of these' throughout his ministry, receiving continuous criticism from the religious establishment of his time. Today, we can do no less. I affirm my personal belief in providing such ministry for all people, including homosexuals, in the context of our overall Christian commitments."

The SBC Executive Committee resolution against homosexuality states, "The Bible says that God regards homosexuality as a gross perversion and unquestioned sin. Unrepentant homosexuality is repeatedly condemned in Scripture." Committee members expressed "deep and compassionate concern for these churches (and their) departure from doctrine and theology generally held by Southern Baptists... ." They resolved "to pray fervently that the Holy Spirit will admonish and enlighten these churches in their deliberations ... that their members will have sufficient grace to know and do that which is right in the eyes of Almighty God ... ."

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Southwestern students respond to  
Parks' call for foreign missions

Baptist Press  
3/2/92

By Scott Collins & Matthew Brady

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Southern Baptists stand before a door of unprecedented opportunity in world missions, the president of the denomination's Foreign Mission Board told students and faculty during Global Missions Week at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Feb. 24-28.

FMB President R. Keith Parks, along with 40 staff members from Richmond, Va., participated in the activities at the Fort Worth, Texas, campus. The week included special chapel services, classroom lectures by FMB personnel and seminars. More than 75 students responded to Parks' invitation to become missionaries.

"I see an opportunity of evangelization that in my estimation has never faced a Christian generation before," Parks said during chapel Feb. 27. "I am convinced there are more people ready to respond to the gospel this day than have ever lived at one time in all of human history."

But Parks, who received a standing applause from students, said not even God himself will force Southern Baptists to walk through that door of opportunity.

"We can make a choice to fail to share the gospel with the people whom God has prepared," he said. "Not because Satan is strong enough to prevent it but because we refuse to be obedient to the spiritual mandate and opportunity God has laid before us."

Parks described a world which stands ready to respond to the gospel. He said in South America missiologists estimate 10,000 people a day come into evangelical churches. In South Korea, 25 percent of the population are evangelicals. In Guatemala, one-third of the population are evangelicals. Parks said last year the mission board experienced a 12 percent growth in baptisms, baptizing 233,334 people or one baptism for every 12 Baptists overseas.

"The response to the gospel is such in many parts of the world that the only limit to the numbers coming to Christ is simply the limit in the numbers of those telling people about Christ," he said. "The door is open to evangelization beyond anything we can imagine and we will decide whether we walk through or be left standing there."

Parks said despite the advances in communications technology and the efforts of missionaries, one out of four people in the world still have never had the chance to hear the name of Jesus.

"Somehow, some way, I am convinced God is calling more of us to go than ever get there," he said.

Parks warned the students the call to foreign missions is often a call to danger.

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"I'm saying to you there are some places in the world where your safety will be threatened, your life will be threatened," he said. "But I come back to say to you that is exactly the New Testament pattern and the New Testament teaching beginning with Christ and moving through all of the apostles. They didn't have an American culture to insist that comfort and convenience and luxury were the lifestyle of Christians but, rather, they believed suffering and danger and death was the lifestyle of Christians and they are the ones who turned the world upside down," he said.

Parks told the students today's door of opportunity is also a door of promise.

"The Lord Christ who died on the cross for you and me promised before that death and resurrection as he sent us to the nations of the world, 'I will be with you,' and by the testimony of everyone who has gone, I would say to you, that promise still stands."

In a separate chapel service, Southwestern students were challenged by the FMB's director of nonresidential missions programs to take the gospel to "World A."

David Garrison described World A as those places in the world which do not have a Christian witness. Those areas include more than 1.2 billion people, he said.

But Garrison said FMB personnel working in parts of World A are finding people there "ripe for harvest. The Lord has preceded you there. He's waiting for you to get there."

Nonresidential missionary Susan Smith told students they can no longer ignore the unreached people of the earth. Recent world events have brought unreached people groups such as the Kurds and ethnic groups in the former Soviet Union "into our living rooms," she said.

"God is trying to get our attention. We can no longer ignore the fact that they're there and they have never, ever heard the gospel of Jesus Christ," Smith said.

Don Kammerdiener, FMB executive vice president, said Southern Baptists believe "the missionary gift is distinct from other gifts of the Spirit of God but it is not a superior gift."

No matter where or how each student serves in the body of Christ, each member is "part of the world mission team," he said.

Kammerdiener encouraged people not called to the foreign mission field to be champions for missions in their churches. Praying and teaching about missions and giving money to missions are all important activities, he said.

"We cannot be faithful to him if we draw any kind of boundaries in our concern that would shut us off from any part of the world."

Some students at Southwestern said the week-long missions emphasis renewed the task of Southern Baptists.

"There is no doubt this type of conference brings back into focus what Southern Baptists are all about," student James Bruce said. "We can be distracted by denominational and personal problems but this focuses our attention back to what we are called to do."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary.

Critical biblical scholarship  
is of the occult, prof says

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--A former student of theologian Rudolf Bultmann, in a recent Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary chapel address, said she has come to the conclusion critical biblical scholarship is of the occult.

Eta Linnemann told the Feb. 19 seminary gathering her personal testimony, telling how she rose through the ranks of German theological scholarship. She studied under such men as Bultmann, Ernst Fuchs, Friedrich Gogarten and Gerhard Ebeling, all experts in the field of historical-critical theology.

She finished her studies and began to teach at Braunschweig Technical University in West Germany and also at the university in Marburg. Presently, she is a professor in Batu, Indonesia at the Theological Seminary of the Indonesian Missionary Fellowship.

Through her observations, Linnemann said she determined no truth could emerge from scientific work on the biblical text and historical criticism does not serve the proclamation of the gospel. This realization brought her to a state of severe depression, she said.

"But the Lord needed it to bring me to zero before he could do something else," she told the chapel audience.

Linnemann's book, "Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology?" was published in 1990 by Baker Book House. It is now in its second printing. She spoke at chapel services and for classes at SEBTS while on a speaking tour of seminaries and colleges in the United States.

The Lord began to work in her life, she said, while she was reading a doctoral thesis concerning the church in Africa, which made mention of prophecy and miracles. The reports "had the stamp of truth for me," she said. But she soon forgot it.

About nine months later, while teaching about the miracles in the New Testament, she heard herself saying perhaps the miracles actually happened, she said. This was a departure from Bultmann's interpretation.

In addition to doubts she was having about historical-critical theology, Linnemann also began to experience first-hand the power of God working in her life, she said. She began attending prayer meetings with some of her students who were born-again Christians. They began praying for her salvation, she said.

At one of these prayer meetings, the pastor gave an invitation for those who did not know Christ to become Christians.

"This is a problem for historical-critical theologians: They think they are Christians and so you can't ask them if they want to become a Christian," Linnemann said. "But through the grace of God the altar call was formulated again and I knew that this was for me. So I answered by raising my hand. From that time there was a deep change in my life."

Linnemann said before she accepted Christ "everything was gray; I had no sins but I had excuses." After she was saved, she was "led by the Lord to discern that everything was no longer gray but white or black. The Lord brought me to the place where I named sin 'sin' and repented of my old life.

"The Lord had convinced me through experience that there were demons of obsession in my life and I had to go through a lot of deliverance counseling. I had to confess some occult sins in my life," Linnemann said.

However, when she studied the Bible, she still found historical-critical theology influencing her interpretation. One day while studying, she prayed in the name of Jesus that God would take away this influence.

"Now when I open my Bible, I don't have this problem," she said. The first time she gave her testimony about this at an evangelical university in Germany, Linneman said a Bible teacher asked her, "Does this mean that historical-critical theology belongs to the occult?"

"At that time I wasn't sure of the answer, but after thinking it over I came to believe that the inspiration of the historical-critical theology is from the occult," Linnemann said. "That is not to say that everyone who uses historical-critical theology is a part of the occult. There is, however, a connection between the two."

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Mentors needed for  
potential ministers

By Chip Alford

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3/2/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--It's an all too familiar story.

Johnny comes forward during the invitation to tell the pastor he feels called into some type of Christian ministry. The pastor prays with him and encourages the congregation to do the same. And then the matter is dropped and, not surprisingly, so are Johnny's plans to enter the ministry.

"Too many young people are slipping through the cracks because people aren't taking the time to nurture and encourage them," said Donna Gandy, a church staff support consultant in the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church administration department. "They need that because without it we will lose a lot of them along the way."

Gandy said a key to successful vocational guidance is to develop a one-on-one "mentor" relationship with those who have expressed interest in Christian ministries.

"When I talk with people in ministry vocations today about their calling, they all say there was some key person who really helped and encouraged them, someone who served as their mentor," she said.

However, a recent study conducted by Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., showed "mentor" relationships may be declining, at least among pastors and young people.

Few of the persons identified as "quality pastors" in the study said they were taking intentional measures to nurture persons toward a call to ministry. Among the reasons cited for their reluctance to do so were: growing societal pressures on ministers, greater demands to respond to personal and family crises, the denominational crisis, the high level of forced terminations and the moral failures of high-profile ministers.

The study also showed few of the pastors were issuing special invitations for young people to respond to a call to Christian ministry although many of them said they made their ministry commitment in response to such an invitation.

One of Gandy's jobs at the Sunday School Board is to help make ministers and others aware of the need to make vocational guidance a priority. Toward that end she helped organize a vocational guidance workgroup, which includes representatives from all SBC agencies and Seminary Extension programs.

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One of the workgroup's first projects has been to develop a new vocational guide for Southern Baptists. The "Guide to Southern Baptist Vocations" is set for release in November 1992. It will include short explanatory articles on approximately 30 vocations in the Southern Baptist Convention from the following categories: church staff, missions/denomination work, education, business administration/finance, communications, technical/support and counseling/social ministry.

The guide, to be updated every other year, also will include an employment outlook for each vocation and a list of resources to consult for further information. In addition, listings of the offerings of Southern Baptist colleges and seminaries will be included.

In addition to working on the new vocational guide, Gandy also maintains the board's Vocational Guidance Registry. Stored in a computer database, the registry currently contains more than 12,000 names of people who have sensed God's call into some type of Christian ministry.

Gandy said the names of those who write the board for more information about ministry vocations are entered into the registry and then they are sent brochures with information about their areas of interest. Gandy said the board also writes the pastors of those who write to encourage them to nurture the potential ministers or Christian workers.

The month of April includes an annual emphasis on ministry vocations, Life Commitment Month. The last Sunday of the month, April 26, is Life Commitment Sunday. The 1992 theme is "Finding Your Place in Ministry: Preparation."

Gandy said the purpose of the emphasis is "to create an awareness among Southern Baptists of the need to commit their lives to Christ and, more specifically, to be open and responsive to God's call to ministry-related vocations."

While the need for vocational guidance is usually associated with young people, Gandy said a calling into ministry can happen at any age.

"Many of the folks I meet in seminary are in late 20s or 30s -- some are in their 40s," she explained. "Many had already started a career and now feel that God has called them into ministry. And even people who reach retirement age sometimes need guidance about what type of volunteer work or part-time ministry they want to be involved in. People of all ages sometimes need help and encouragement when it comes to career and ministry choices."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by SSB bureau of Baptist Press.

10-year-old missionary kid  
dies following brain surgery

By Mary E. Speidel

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HOUSTON (BP)--Chris Freeman, 10-year-old son of Southern Baptist missionaries Mike and Doris Freeman, died Feb. 29 following brain surgery at a Houston hospital.

Chris underwent surgery Feb. 27 to remove a benign cyst from his pituitary gland. He was recovering fairly well when he lapsed into a coma Feb. 28 for unknown reasons, said his father. Surgeons operated again that night to relieve pressure on Chris' brain but discovered his brain tissue already was deteriorating. The child died early the next morning.

At the time of his death, Chris was living with his parents in the missionary home of Lazybrook Baptist Church in Houston. The Freemans, missionaries to Argentina, have been on furlough in Houston since early February. Chris' condition was diagnosed during a medical exam after the family returned to the United States.

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His parents, both of Houston, are associational promoters working in leadership training and discipleship among Argentine Baptists near Resistencia. Before missionary appointment in 1987, his father was assistant director of the Baptist Mission Centers in Houston and a Southern Baptist home missions pastor in Bloomfield, Ind.

Born in New Orleans, Chris also lived in Bloomfield, Ind.; Houston; San Jose, Costa Rica; Buenos Aires and Resistencia, Argentina.

An only child, Chris "loved Argentina," his father said. During the family's first week on furlough in Houston, Chris had asked when they could "go home" (to Argentina), Freeman said.

Chris was baptized by his father in Barranqueras, Argentina, in the first baptismal service Freeman performed on the mission field. "He was a big asset to our ministry in Argentina," his father said. "He was always concerned about other people and about others knowing Jesus."

Besides his parents, Chris is survived by grandparents, W.O. and Leola Boswell of North Zulch, Texas, Vera Brinkley of Houston and Horace Freeman of Tampa, Fla.; a stepgrandmother, Sylvia Freeman of Tampa; and a great-grandmother, Paula Freeman of Tampa.

Services were scheduled March 3 at Lazybrook Baptist Church in Houston.

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President Bush attends service  
at First Baptist, Atlanta

Baptist Press  
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ATLANTA (BP)--President George Bush and his wife, Barbara, attended Sunday morning worship services at First Baptist Church in Atlanta Mar. 1 but did not address the congregation.

It was the last day of a presidential campaign swing through Georgia for the Bush family. Pastor Charles Stanley introduced the Bushes who were handed a visitor's card as were other visitors that day.

Although the President did not speak, heavy security measures meant metal detectors and searches of personal belongings at the front door during the early worship service. One church member said it seemed swarms of security personnel were everywhere.

President Bush, an Episcopalian, was applauded when recognized. Pastor Stanley preached from the first chapter of Joshua.

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